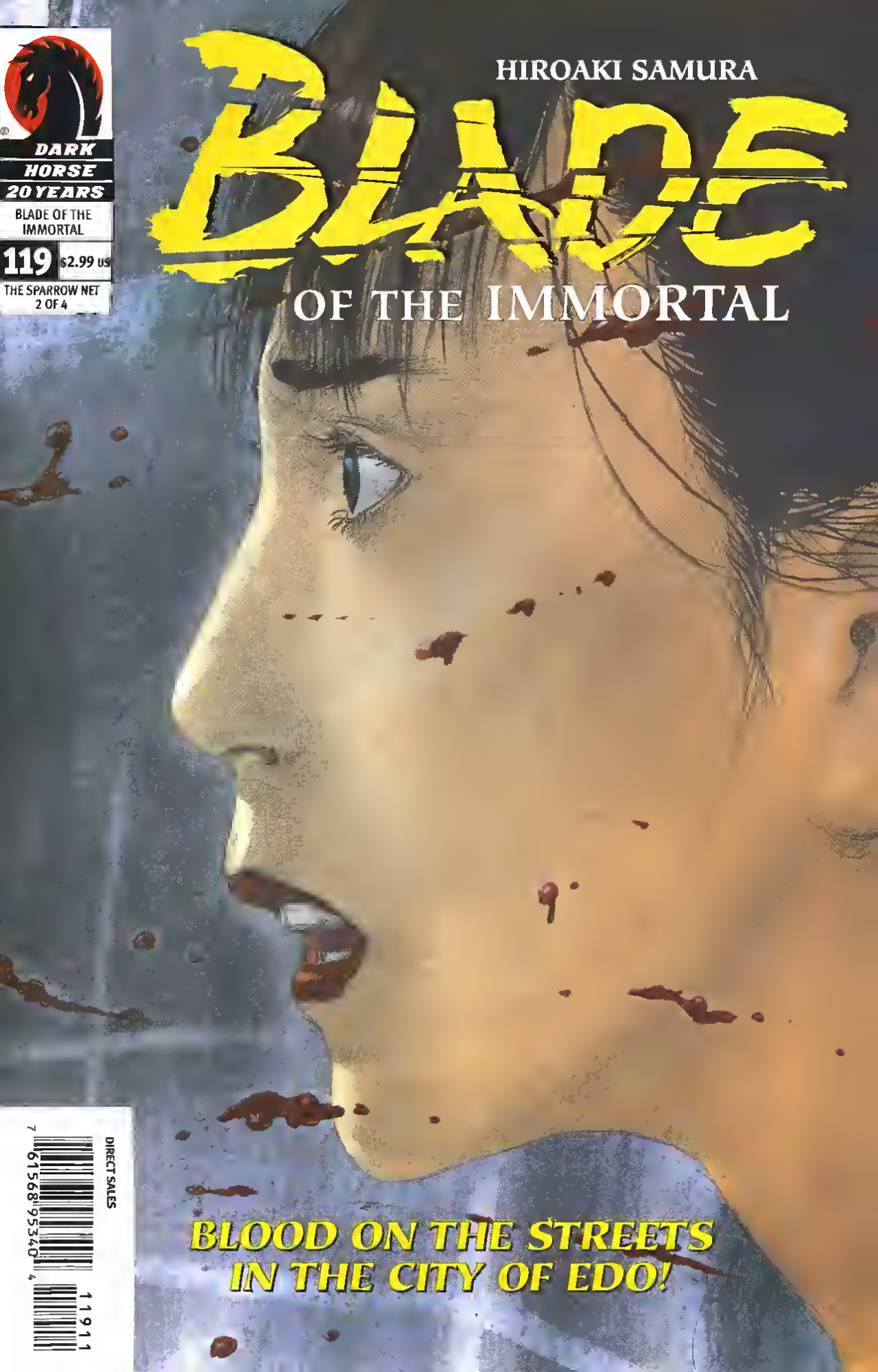
DARK HORSE 20 YEARS
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
119
$2.99 US
THE SPARROW NET 2 OF 4
HIROAKI SAMURA
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
DIRECT SALES
BLOOD ON THE STREETS IN THE CITY OF EDO!

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by **DANA LEWIS**
lettering and retouch by **TOMOKO SAITO**
cover colors by **DAN JACKSON**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *ronin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dojo* destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*

ANOTSU

The leader of the Itto-*ryū* sword school, targeted by the Mugai-*ryū*

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Powerful *bangashira*, and former head of the disbanded Mugai-*ryū*

ISAKU

Dōa's trusted bodyguard and member of the Ittō-*ryū*

DŌA

Dōa, an Ittō-*ryū* warrior, is slowly befriending Rin, with neither of them knowing their real connection.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Imprisoned in an underground cell, Manji is an unwilling participant in Habaki Kagimura's "immortality experiments." Burando, Kagimura's lead medical examiner, fails to transfer the powers of the *kessen-chu* to another human, and he loses his grip on reality after too many prisoners die under his watch. After receiving a clue to Manji's whereabouts from Giichi, Rin rejoins Dōa and Isaku in the streets of Edo, only to have Dōa pick another fight with the local police.

designer **SCOTT COOK** editorial assistant **RYAN JORGENSEN**
editor **PHILIP SIMON** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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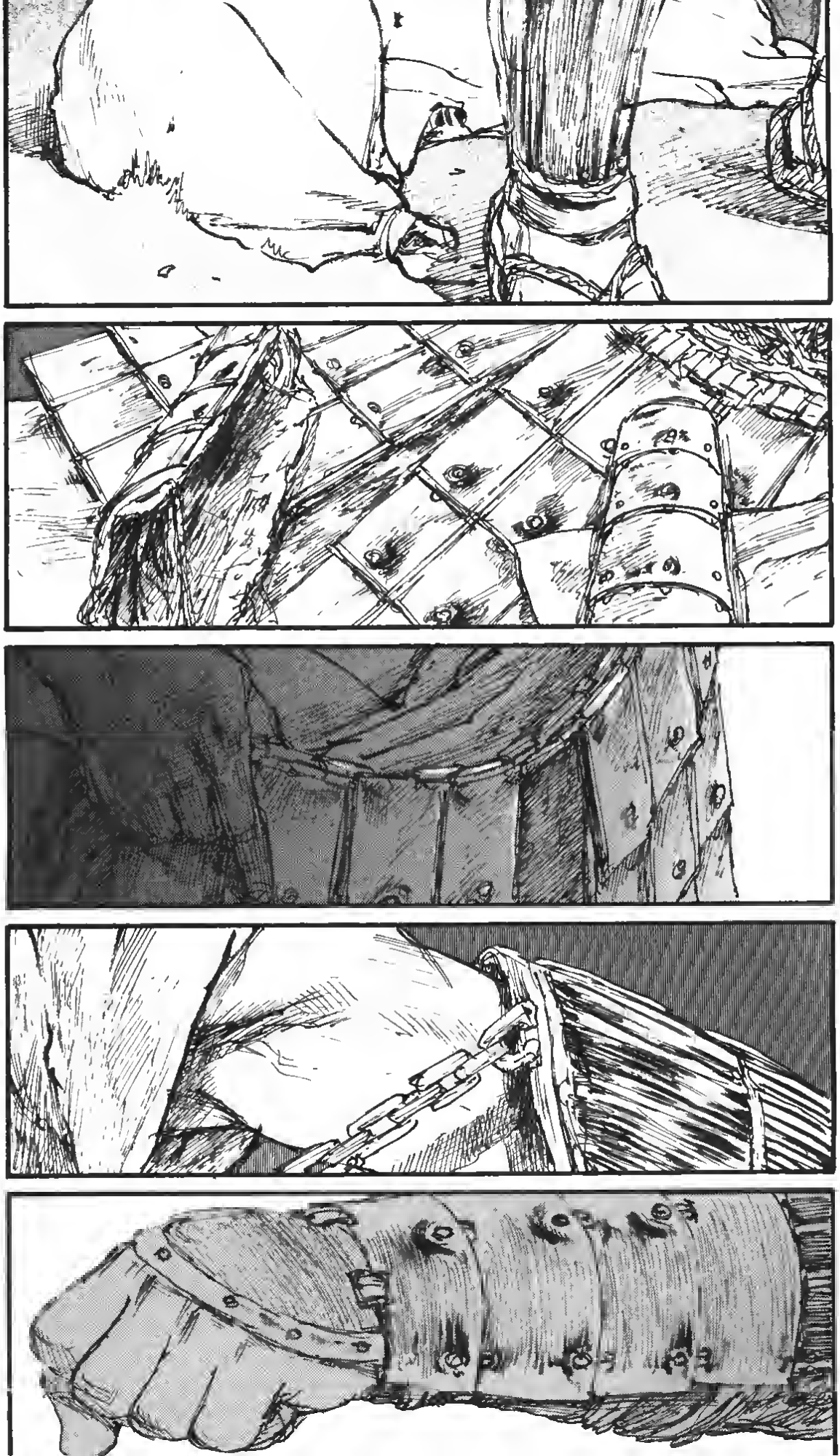
無限の住人

THE SPARROW NET

-part two-



GO-YŌ!
GO-YŌ!
GO-YŌ!
GO-YŌ!
GO-YŌ!

WHERE'RE YOUR STUPID LANTERNS, YOU SHOWOFFS?!
WANNA-BES!
ISAKU! STOP DOA!
SHE'S DRAWN, BUT WE CAN TALK OUR WAY OUT.
IF SHE HURTS A HATCHŌ-BORI, IT'S DEATH ROW!
...RIN-SAN.

TH-
THANKS
FOR
WORRYING...
BUT...
...IT'S
ALL THE
SAME.
?
THE
SAME...?
YOU
BITCH!
A GUY
ONLY
GETS
TWO
OF 'EM!
SURROUND
'EM!!

!
THUD!
UNF!
SKRASSH

GO PEACE-FULLY... OR... OR...
...RESIST... AND PAY UNTIL WE DRAGGED YOU IN.
DAMN YOU... UNTIL NOW...
...YOU BASTARDS HAD A CHOICE.
NO CHOICE NOW... FUCKERS!
BUT... THAT'S HISTORY!
ISAKU!

KA-KA
KAKK!
?!
DID YOU JUST--?
AH!

GGGGGGG
CLASH!
FUCK!
FUCK!
HUH?
WHO?!
BEHIND
YOU!

HHYAAH!
KYNG!
KYNG!
KYNG!
.....
.....!
ぜんぇ!

TAP
LEGGO, YOU--!!
D-DAMMIT!!

.....
.....
.....

OVER THERE!
GYAH!!
WHERE IS SHE?!

AHH-RAHH...!
"PUT UP OUR HANDS FIRST?
"NOPE!
"WE'VE KILLED PEOPLE!
"FIVE... NO, MORE."
SHIIIIT!
YAIEE!
AH...?! S-SORRY!

KE-TCHI!!

.....
.....
.....

whhf

"...DŌA.

"YOU SHALL NEVER AGAIN KILL TO STEAL.

"HAVING PASSED THROUGH ITTŌ-RYŪ'S GATE...
"...YOU MAY WIELD YOUR BLADE FOR BUT THREE REASONS.
"ONE, WHEN YOUR PRINCIPLES ARE THREATENED.
"TWO, WHEN ONE IMPORTANT TO YOU IS IN DANGER.
"THREE, WHEN YOUR OWN LIFE IS AT STAKE."
RIGHT. I'M IN THE CLEAR...
KO-BAYASHI... USE THIS.
EH?! BUT...
IS IT REALLY... OKAY?
IT'S FINE. I'LL OVERLOOK IT.

AND IS THIS *THE TIME* FOR QUESTIONS?!
IF WE DON'T KILL 'EM, WE'RE--!
YOU GUYS, *TOO!* DUMP THE *KARAMI!* THE *SASU-MATA.* THE *UCHIKOMI.*
USE YOUR *JITTE!* YOU CAN'T KEEP UP WITH HER WITH ANYTHING *LONGER.*

WHOA!
OUCH...

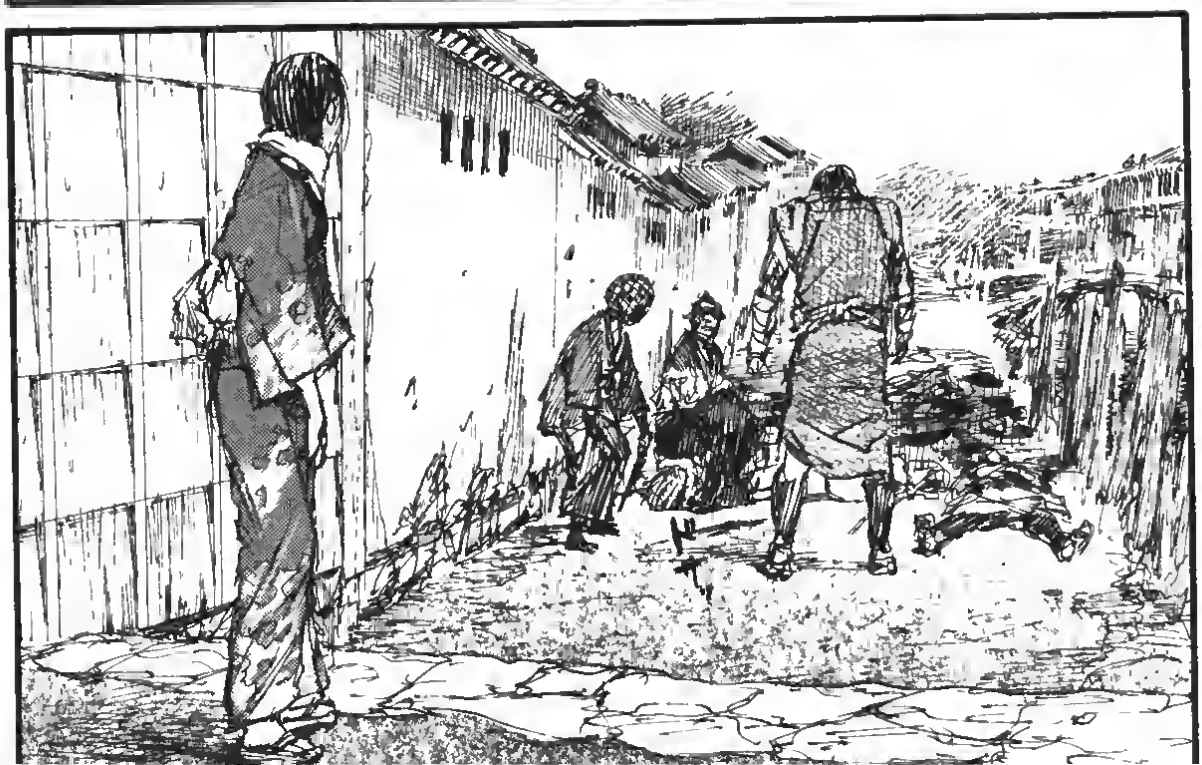
DAMN YOU! EVERY TIME!
GET OUT OF THE WAY! YOU LUMP ON A LOG!
SKRAAK
KS-HOK
SPASH
HAH?
.....
.....
.....

FUCKIN'
KID...!

GASP!

DŌA!!
DIE !!
JUST
DIEEE!!

I...
GOT
HER...?
.....
.....
.....
THAT...
THAT'S...
...NOT...
...FAIR
!!



MY OBI CAME LOOSE...
.....! HEEK!
TEN MEN... IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE...
D-DŌA. HE'S AL-READY...
EEP!
GYAH!
NO... AIEEE!!
.....
.....
.....

DAZZL-ING!
IN TRUTH... INCRED-IBLE.
BUT... BUT!! THEY WERE JUST...
...SOME COPS WHO HAD SOME QUESTIONS.
STRIKE FIRST? KILL EVERY-ONE?
HALT, HALT, HALT!!
DON'T MOVE, ANY OF YOU.
WHEN THAT'S ALL THEY WERE...?
Y-YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE THAT!

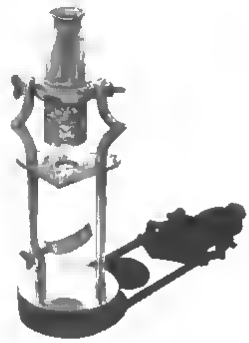
WE HEAR SCREAM-ING... AND WHEN WE COME TO CHECK...
...WE FIND CORPSES?! STREWN ON THE BANKS?!
AND YOU... THE MISCRE-ANTS?

TO BE CONTINUED...!

NEXT MONTH:
THE SPARROW NET, Part 3 of 4

Isn't it almost funny, how Dōa (the Ittō-*ryū* sparkplug) so brashly hurls herself into trouble? She's in some serious danger, though, and Edo's angry police force has her and her friends cornered and outnumbered. Deranged Doc Burando stews in a jail cell, having failed his master too many times. However, that doesn't mean that his twisted mind will stop thinking about Manji and the mysterious *kessen-chu* bloodworms that grant immortality to their hosts. *Blade of the Immortal* #120 will also feature Stan Shaw's final back cover "Seasons" illustration, which will link up to issues 117 through 119 to complete a gorgeous color *quadtych* image!

無限の住人



GLOSSARY

Bangashira: Head of the *banshū.*

Banshū: Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Dōjō: A school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts; here, a training center for swordsmanship.

Dōshin: Police constables from the lower ranks of the samurai caste.

Edo: Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo.

Gō-Rojū: Senior councilors to the shogun, picked from the most trusted feudal lords.

Go-yō: Literally, "official business," but in practice, this was the police command to miscreants ordering them to surrender to authorities. Police posses carried *go-yō* lanterns as well.

Hatchōbori: A district in Edo, and, in this case, slang for the police constables who patrol that area.

Ittō-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Jitte: A specialized weapon carried by street cops. It's about eighteen inches long, with no cutting edge—just two prongs designed to catch and snap off an opponent's sword blade.

Kessen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal.

Mugai-ryū: A group of criminals who worked as assassins for the shogunate, earning their freedom by killing assigned targets. Disbanded by Habaki Kagimura.

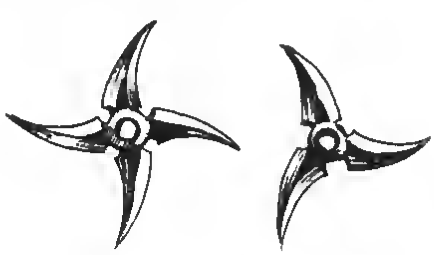
Mutenichi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa.

Obi: The broad fabric band used to close kimono and other traditional dress.

Okappiki: An Edo-era policeman who was nevertheless a commoner (and sometimes a former criminal) and could not carry a sword.

Ryū: A sword school.

Shitappiki: Another name for a lower-class Edo-era policeman. As commoners, they could not carry a sword.



TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

Page 6: When Dōa asks, "Where're your stupid *lanterns*, you show-offs?!" she is referring to the *go-yō* lanterns that Edo-era police often carried at night.

Page 20: Kobayashi hesitates to take his superior's sword, this is because the *okappiki* and *shitappiki* were not samurai caste and were not usually allowed to carry swords.

Page 21: *Karami*, *sasumata*, and *uchikomi* are a variety of non-lethal weapons designed to pin down and immobilize a criminal. The hand-held *jitte* was designed to trap and snap sword blades.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

BIOGRAPHY

of Hiroaki Samura, Part Five

(Translated by Riko Frohnmayer)

Ian A. Ian (inkerist), a strong creative force behind the unit Hiroaki Samura before his untimely death.

Rumors of Ian A. Ian's power within the manga unit Hiroaki Samura were frequent during the early 1980s. One rumor (that turned out to be false) was that after a round of auditions, Ian fired a newly hired screen tone worker—just because he smelled like fish. Another rumor was that another replacement, Sniper Lee's college buddy, was also fired just because of his looks.

Gossip had it that Ian's reckless behavior was caused by his addictions to cocaine and alcohol. In 1985, a traumatic incident occurred which would verify these speculations about him . . .

In the summer of 1985, Ian got into an accidental assault incident with somebody for a silly reason. During his worldwide press conference, which was to serve as his vindication of the incident, he wound up revealing that he was addicted to drugs. Furthermore, he revealed that he was gay and had tested negative for HIV. Then an unbelievable incident occurred . . . just four hours after the conference, his plane crashed. Ian miraculously survived the crash and was sent to the hospital. However, nght after he was released, he got crazy drunk, passed out, choked on his own vomit, and died.

This is how the inital phase of Hiroaki Samura evolved and came to an end. After Ian's funeral, the only remaining member, Sniper Lee, finally came to the conclusion to break up the unit. It would take almost eight years for Lee and this unit to revive from the bottom of despair and rise like a phoenix to a new beginning.

-END-

(Dear readers, the *real* Hiroaki Samura ran these playful biography pieces on the dust jackets of the Japanese editions of *Blade of the Immortal (Mugen no Junin)*, volumes 14 through 17.)

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

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BACK-COVER PINUP—"MAGATSU" BY STAN SHAW!

Part three of a four-part back cover series that will link up with *Blade of the Immortal* #s 117, 118, and 120 to form a bold, larger image. Stan wrote and drew a *Beauty and the Beast* adaptation for Dark Horse Comics, and he also contributed comics to *Dark Horse Presents* and *Grendel: Black, White, and Red*. He is a teacher and professional illustrator, having worked with *Esquire*, *Mad*, *Star Wars Insider*, and the *Washington Post*, among many others. Next month's "Seasons" pinup: Winter with Manji!

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KRYPTONIA-DGP